



View from the Blackdown Hills

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Issue 78 April 2011

Your community newspaper

SUSPENDED

Spending review puts a stop to community funding programme

By LUCIE SIMIC

blackdown@indienews.co.uk

THE effect of last year's government spending review has reached Making it Local, a local funding programme for small businesses and community groups, which has had to be suspended temporarily to new applicants.

Making it Local is a £2.4million fund which covers the Blackdown Hills and east Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and some surrounding towns and parishes.

It is part of the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE) which is currently managed by the regional development agencies but will transfer to Defra in July 2011.

On Monday, March 7th the Making it Local team received news that the South West RDA has decided to suspend funding programmes like Making it Local while Defra review and reallocate spending.

Making it Local chairman Councillor Paul Diviani said: "We cannot approve any new applications at present, but we will still accept and advise on applications so that they can move forward quickly when the money is released in a few months' time."

"The Making it Local team are also working hard to help projects find alternative funding, so we would encourage people to continue to contact us."

Making it Local, which is hosted by Devon County Council, has already committed £1.2million to the rural economy of the two AONBs.

Successful applicant David Willis said: "We were able to make our village hall at Donyatt much more energy efficient, saving money and reducing our carbon footprint. Making it Local is a perfect example of the Big Society in action — communities finding solutions for their own needs."

"We hope that other communities can benefit from it in the future, as we have in Donyatt."

Making it Local is a five-year grants fund offering up to £100,000 support for projects that make the most of the outstanding landscape and local skills and bring long lasting prosperity and economic benefit to the area.

The programme has two funding schemes; the Main Grants Fund — £10,000 to £100,000 — and the Small Grants Fund — £1,000 to £10,000. The programme area covers Blackdown Hills and east Devon Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

For further information contact the Making it Local team on 01823 680626, or email makingitlocal@devon.gov.uk.



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Blackdown Support Group

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Making It Local

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District council set to send out 127k poll cards

By LUCIE SIMIC

blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

VOTERS living in the Blackdown Hills will soon see their white polling cards drop onto their doormats ready for the May local elections and referendum on how MPs are elected.

South Somerset District Council is sending out 127,000 polling cards to those registered to vote, with deliveries beginning at the end of last month.

Voters are being encouraged to look out for the card and to keep it in a safe place ready to take with them to the polling station on Thursday, May 5th.

Details of how and when to apply for a postal vote or a proxy vote — where a trusted person is nominated to vote on your behalf — are on the back of the polling card for anyone who will not be able to go to the polling station on the day.

In addition to the usual local elections on May 5th, the Government is holding a Referendum on the same day which will influence a decision on whether the UK changes the way it elects MPs from the present "first past the post" system to the "alternative vote" system instead.

Roger Quantock, deputy returning officer at South Somerset District Council said: "If you have never registered to vote, it is

easy to do so. All of the information and forms are together in one place on our website and people can contact us by phone or come to the council offices.

"If your details have changed since last year's general election, such as your address or name, it is also best to check with the elections team here at South Somerset District Council."

Only those not already registered, or those with details that need to be changed, need to do anything.

More information is at www.southsomerset.gov.uk/elections or from South Somerset District Council on 01935 462462.



◆ THE inaugural meeting of Ferne Animal Sanctuary's management committee took place in January, 1991. Two decades on, convening member Margaret Carter, who is also a member of the board of trustees of Ferne, was presented with flowers and a framed picture of her own cat, Tigger, drawn by fellow trustee David Selley. Pictured are fellow trustees Adrian Dixon, Nanette Wale and Polly Mulligan with Margaret Carter, third from the left

WORKING OUR WOODLANDS

Blackdown and East Devon
Woodland Association with
John Greenshields

NOW is the time to check those trees you planted last year, check for wind blow and spray around base to subdue weed growth.

Rabbits and voles are a problem so also check guards and mulch if necessary, excessive digging by animals can cause weak trees.

The Woodland Association is holding its annual meeting and woodland forum on April 6th at Offwell, visit www.woodbiz.co.uk. There are several speakers and representatives from the Woodland Trust, Working our Woodlands and others to answer your questions. It should be an informative meeting but you will have to book as space is limited, there will be a light supper and a bar.

Remember you should not be cutting down trees until September now, unless absolutely necessary, and then only after checking for nests. It is false economy anyway as in the summer the tree is full of sap and will take twice as long to season. We cut all winter and haul out in the summer when the ground is able to stand the machines, and cause less damage to the woodland. Remember to leave those rotten bits in a heap for bugs and beetles as it is no good for fire wood.

Park Farm is hosting another Chainsaw Awareness morning on May 27th. The first was very successful and over-subscribed.

The aim of the course to help users, whether experienced or not, operating on their own to be aware of the dangers and provide the knowledge to be safe and competent.

I have just come back from a three-day timber stress and grading course and it may sound dull but I found it very interesting.

We have lost the ability to trust the strength of wood. The timber that you buy in the builder merchants is over graded, this means we use more timber that is necessary for the job. In my 450-year farmhouse, the 18ft beams are 9"x9", but when we converted a barn with the same length beams we had to cut the oak to 14"x14" to meet building regulations, now my old beams may be sagging a bit but the are still there!

My usual contacts for any queries are parkfarm@tinyonline.co.uk or 01823 660764.

Contact the news team at blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

Your VIEW FROM THE BLACKDOWN HILLS team



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School celebrates healthy award



◆ **STAFF** and pupils at Dalwood Primary School have celebrated receiving the Healthy School Award. To qualify for the award, the school had to meet 62 criteria relating to matters like healthy eating, physical activity, emotional health and well-being. Acting headteacher Jane Sims said: "We are delighted that the achievements of this small rural school have been recognised with this award."

Fake census collection, warn police

POLICE are warning people to beware of bogus callers posing as census collectors.

The census is a count of the population in the UK. It takes place every 10 years and this time is happened on March 27th. It involves every householder in the country filling out a questionnaire on the same day to give a complete picture of the nation.

The job of census field staff is to speak to householders who have not filled in their forms, so it is unlikely that they will call on people before April 6th, once all returned forms are processed.

Although there have been no cases of this kind in the Blackdown Hills, the advice follows a recent complaint to Trading Standards in Leicestershire, another part of the country, about a bogus caller, trying to enter someone's house by posing as a census official.

PC Andy Williams, who works on the forcewide team that tackles distraction burglary, said: "In our experience, fraudsters will take advantage of any situation to con people or to access homes to steal, and the opportunity presented by the census is no exception."

"We are urging people to only answer the questions in the census form. They should not disclose credit card or bank details and not pay any money to anyone claiming to be from the census. Remember if you are not sure, don't open the door."

A spokesperson for the Office for National Statistics, which is carrying out the census, said: "Residents who return their completed questionnaires promptly are unlikely to be contacted by the census field staff, and all census staff will produce an ID card with a photo and logo."

"They may ask for name and number of residents, but they will not ask for specific details, like credit card details and bank account numbers. If you're unsure about a caller, close the door and ring the census helpline on 0300 0201 101, to verify whether it is a genuine census call."

"If you do think you've had a bogus call, ring the police. If you find that you are a victim of a bogus caller, call Consumer Direct on 0845 404 0506."

Vital funding to community's 11 key organisations

By **LUCIE SIMIC**
blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

ELEVEN voluntary organisations providing key services to residents of part of the Blackdown Hills — including debt advice, youth services, education, arts and community support — have been awarded vital funding this week by South Somerset District Council (SSDC).

A total of £243,000 was awarded through the district council's corporate grants committee to organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, South Somerset Voluntary and Community Action and Somerset Rural Youth Project.

Alice Knight, third sector and partnership manager at South Somerset District Council said: "Our corporate grants committee looks at supporting the large, voluntary organisations that provide crucial services to residents across south Somerset."

"We have looked very carefully at providing support to organisations that, in turn, will be able to continue benefiting thousands of people throughout the year."

"It is vital they can achieve longer-term stability. These grants are about

giving them a chance to plan for the future and a platform for attracting other funding."

"These organisations deliver vital services to vulnerable people in south Somerset, and through skilled and experienced volunteers are able to reach out to individuals and communities across the district."

The Citizen's Advice Bureau was awarded £117,000 as part of a three-year funding agreement, whilst the Community Council for Somerset, which works to develop and regenerate rural communities, was granted £9,460.

A further £71,000 was awarded to South Somerset Voluntary and Community Action which provides community transport to vulnerable or isolated people, and offers free advice to small voluntary organisations looking for help and funding.

A £10,400 award was made to Take Art! which encourages arts, dance, theatre, writing and entertainment across the county. Somerset Rural Youth Project which provides activities, volunteering opportunities and advice to young people was given £8,000 as part of an ongoing support package. Actiontrack, Somerset Art Weeks, Somerset Partnership Arts Education and Somerset Film were also given support by the grants, which are aimed at benefiting arts,

entertainment, support and advice organisations.

£7,000 was awarded to South Somerset Disability Forum, who work to improve the lives of disabled people in the district by improving access to services including facilities, buildings, leisure, transport, shops and the countryside. A further £8,000 was awarded to the Somerset Race Equality Council to help the council deliver its public sector duties under the Equality Act 2010, through elimination of discrimination and harassment.

Ms Knight added: "Whilst the council has had to make savings in a number of areas, including grants to the voluntary sector, SSDC recognises that in some areas of work, voluntary organisations play a vitally important role in delivering services and meeting the needs of rural communities. Through supporting the voluntary sector, we can support communities to help themselves."

"Over the forthcoming years as the council faces further significant budget reductions, we will be continuing our work with voluntary organisations to help them become more self-sustaining and less dependent on public sector funds."

For more information visit www.southsomerset.gov.uk/grants or contact 01963 435061.

Locals learn about area air ambulance

SOMERSET and Dorset residents were all invited to have a closer look at the area's air ambulance during Emergency Services Day in Vivary Park, Taunton, on Sunday, March 20th.

Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance's (DSAA) yellow Euro 135 helicopter was one of the attractions of the day.

The free of charge event aimed to provide an opportunity for people to learn more about the emergency services.

As well as the air ambulance helicopter, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, together with Avon and Somerset Constabulary, put on a dramatic road traffic collision demonstration.

Other attractions included road safety displays, advice on child safety seats and safe cycling, and opportunities to sit in a police car, ambulance, and fire engine.

More information about the Dorset and Somerset Air Ambulance can be found by visiting www.dsairambulance.org.uk or by emailing info@dsairambulance.org.uk or calling 01823 669604.

Nominations open

THE nomination process for forthcoming district, town and parish council elections in south Somerset has opened.

South Somerset District Council is acting as the Electoral Authority for both levels of the local elections, which will be held on Thursday, May 5th and has published a handy leaflet to give guidance on how to become a candidate.

Nomination papers are available by contacting SSDC's Democratic Services Team on 01935 462462 or by visiting the council offices at Brympton Way, Yeovil. All submissions must be made by Monday, April 4th at 12noon.

Council vacancies

THERE will be vacancies on the Hemyock Parish Council as it approaches its elections on May 5th.

Chairman Heather Stallard said that villagers should consider putting themselves forward for this important work. She explained: "Hemyock is a vibrant village with bold plans for the future."

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◆ PUPILS at All Saints Primary School learned to enjoy the outdoors when staff from The Magdalen Project in Winsham visited on Friday, March 18th. Staff from the environmental education centre led sessions on a variety of subjects and the photo shows Tilda Gibbs getting the fire going so pupils can enjoy marshmallows on sticks

Something old event for Royal Wedding

THE village of Dalwood will be celebrating the Royal Wedding with Something Old, Something New, an exhibition of wedding dresses, in Dalwood Church on Saturday, April 30th.

Lots of local ladies have kept their dresses for years, and have jumped at the chance to give them an outing. The earliest dress on display is from 1920, and there will be several family groups of three generations.

There will also be a chance to see what the next generation might choose to wear — students from Axe Valley Community College and Colyton Grammar School will each produce a dress for the display.

The dresses will be on show from 10am to 5pm. Tea, coffee and cake will be available in the village hall, and the Tuckers Arms pub will be open all day.

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New website allows victims to track crime investigation

RTA figure too high but less deaths

A ROAD safety partnership says there are too many accidents on Somerset roads, but the numbers of deaths and serious injuries are falling.

Although there were 32 deaths last year on Somerset's roads — a reduction of two on the previous year — and 206 serious injuries, the total has fallen consistently over the last 20 years according to Somerset Road Safety Partnership.

Last year's combined figure for deaths and serious injuries is 238, which is well below the annual average of 376 in the mid 1990s.

Terry Beale of Somerset Road Safety Partnership said: "While there are still far too many crashes and injuries on our roads, this downward trend is very encouraging.

"The Partnership will continue to work together in a bid to further reduce the number of casualties on Somerset roads."

• Somerset Road Safety Partnership was formed in 2006 by Somerset County Council, Avon and Somerset Constabulary, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, NHS and the Highways Agency, because of serious concern over the rising number of crashes and casualties on the county's roads.

By LUCIE SIMIC
blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

AN online case progress service has been launched by Avon and Somerset Police for crime victims.

TrackMyCrime, is offered to all victims of crime in the force area.

It will allow them to track the progress of their crime as it's investigated by police officers by providing access to information extracted from police systems.

Deputy chief constable Rob Beckley said: "We've introduced TrackMyCrime to keep victims informed about the status of their crime in a more streamlined and efficient way.

"It combines policing with modern technology and gives victims more choice about how they want to receive information from us."

Police say the system will cut the time

spent waiting for police officers to call them back about their crime as they will automatically be updated either by e-mail or text as officers fill in information on police computers.

Victims can also send messages back to the investigation team and view information about their stolen or damaged property.

Scott Fulton, head of services for Avon and Somerset Police said: "No one wants to be the victim of a crime but if you are then you want it to impact on your life as little as possible.

"We developed this system to provide victims of crime with more choice about how they are updated and with a better service.

"You can check your bank account and track parcels on-line, it makes sense to provide a service where you can check details about your crime too."

‘HEDGE’ EVENT WITH A PRINCE

ROGER Parris, Terry Coombe and John Vickery were invited to a hedgelaying competition run by the National Hedgelaying Society (NHLs) on Saturday, February 12th.

Roger and Terry competed and John Vickery went along as a driver. The competition took place at Home Farm, part of the Highgrove estate belonging to Prince Charles, himself a very keen hedgelayer.

There were various regional styles of hedge laying represented at the competition but not Devon style and this meant that Roger and Terry had to lay

Derbyshire style instead. The hedge was uniform but contained some quite large material which presented a challenge.

Prince Charles inspected all the hedges before participating in the competition himself. He took particular interest in Roger's gaiters and asked where he got them. Roger told the Prince that they might have belonged to either his father or grandfather.

Although Roger and Terry weren't placed, they were told by the judges that they had made a very good job of laying Derbyshire style. This now means that they can not only lay Devon style but Somerset, Midland, Derbyshire and Dorset styles as well.



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A View from the Blackdowns



PHOTO BY LUCIE SIMIC

◆ A SPRING view of St Peter's Church, Dalwood

Do you have a photo of a View from the Blackdowns? Email it to blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

Project opens doors to show off photo archives

By LUCIE SIMIC

blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

THE Blackdown Archives project is opening its doors for 10 days to capture peoples' memories and display its collection of more than 2,300 local family photographs.

During the second weekend of every month, from April to August, locals and visitors alike will be welcomed by members of the Hemyock History and Archiving Association — voluntary keepers of the historic records.

One by one, the fragile photographs have been scanned and added to the collection. Many have been digitally enhanced to capture interesting detail, often missed until now.

Now, these images are being added to the Blackdown Archives website — a programme part-funded by the Blackdown Hills AONB's Sustainable Development Fund and Making It Local.

Already, the pictures have locals recalling people, places and memories of

yesteryear. By opening the doors to the public, the team hope to capture many more of these fascinating stories and add them to the website, for the Blackdown Hills community to share.

Pictures and documents that anyone would like added to the archive are most welcome — all will be scanned and the originals returned while you wait. Enhanced photo quality print will be available to order and make ideal framed pictures.

The open days run from 12noon to 3pm at the Blackdown Healthy Living Centre on Saturday and Sunday April 9th and 10th, May 14 and 15th, June 11th and 12th, July 9th and 10th and August 13th and 14th.

Entrance is free although donations will be welcome. All proceed will go to the Hemyock History and Archiving Association.

The centre is located at Riverside in Hemyock, Devon. Parking, modern disabled facilities and light refreshments will be available.

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A View from the clubs

Reality of war brought into focus by chaplain

THE cost and reality of war were brought into sharp focus when 40 Commando's chaplain Andrew Rawding joined Hemyock Men for breakfast.

During last year's tour in Afghanistan 14 men lost their lives and Andrew was responsible for repatriation and memorial services for each.

There were also other deaths in the group including US forces who turned to him for ministry.

Necessarily Andrew continues to offer support the bereaved families here in the UK.

This impassioned officer, whose insights challenged any 'romantic view' of war, had previously served nine years in the Army with the Royal Fusiliers.

Andrew spoke about the 4 'P's of his role amongst the Royal Marines.

Presence: being there for everyone, ready to give comfort and support.

Prophetic: To teach and speak out for God, giving a moral compass.

Prayerful: for all those who serve and for those who ask for it specifically.

Pastoral: support for all who seek it, whatever their religion, beliefs or background might be.

Andrew, who has served in Northern Ireland and Bosnia, spoke of his desire to see peace and reconciliation brought to Afghanistan, and about the sincerity of faith which he observed amongst what was a very tough enemy.



♦ CHAPLAIN Andrew Rawding, left, shares breakfast with Brain Watt and Doug Dyke.

He felt that Christians had much more in common with sincere Muslims from Sangin than Anglo Saxon atheists in the UK.

An unnamed ex-Royal Marine said: "His passion and commitment were incredible, his war stories moving and should really remind people like me that the chance to 'whack it' to Johnny Taliban is

not as 'romantic' as people might perceive." Hemyock resident Tom Conneeley said: "I was hugely impressed with the speaker, he left me reflecting all day on what he said - just the ticket."

Retired officer Tim Courtenay remarked: "Many thanks for today, a straight talking, experienced service padre with very strong views."

Informative talks within club walls

MEMBERS of Hemyock Gardners have had many interesting speakers over the years but have recently discovered much talent in their own membership.

Jane Smith gave a most informative talk recently on pruning. She brought various branches of trees and shrubs and with sharp secateurs, proceeded to show members exactly how the job should be done.

Jane has horticultural training and runs her own landscape gardening business. She had brought a sheet of printed advice for everyone explaining when the best time to prune various plants is.

In March, it was fellow member Julie Steed's turn to give members an informative and useful talk. Julie dealt with Pests and

Diseases. Julie had worked at Rothamstead's experimental place in Hertfordshire.

Julie gave a well-illustrated presentation, dealing with the member's top 10 problems. These included such things as ground elder, moles and blackspot. Julie prefers an organic approach to her own problems but realised that not everyone is so inclined.

The next meeting of the group will take place on April 13th. Michael Pollock is visiting Hemyock to speak about growing prize-winning vegetables. This will be in Forbes Lounge at 7.30pm.

However, before that, the Spring Show takes place in the parish hall on Saturday, April 9th. Exhibits are to be staged between 9am and 11am. It will be open to the public at 2pm.

Send your club news to
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COURSES AND EVENTS AT BEECH HAYES FARM, CHURCHINFORD 2011

Smallholders Taster Day- 5th/6th March

Introduction to keeping pigs- 10th April

Springtime on the Farm (with Blackdown Hills AONB) 13th April

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◆ CHILDREN from Buckland St Mary Church of England Primary School wore something funny for money on Friday, March 18th raising £64.87. Lots of children wore their pyjamas or great costumes. Ben Fenton, 10, swapped roles with his twin sister dressing as a young lady for the day. Pupils are pictured above and top right



Red is the colour for kids

A SPLASH of colour was added to the daily routine for staff and youngsters at a Blackdown Hills children's nursery as they supported this year's Comic Relief appeal.

They wore red clothes and a red nose or used red face paint as Blackdown Children's Day Nursery, Wellington, supported the annual charity appeal on Friday.

The children also made red masks and helped to make cakes and biscuits decorated in red which were sold to parents to help raise funds.

Nursery manager Trudy Wilton said: "Comic Relief allows us to mix some great fun for the children with supporting a very worthy cause at the

same time.

"We were also very pleased with the support parents gave us by bringing their children to nursery in red clothing and also buying the cakes and biscuits they made."

Blackdown Children's Day Nursery offers weekday childcare from 8am to 6pm for parents with children aged from three months to five years. It is located in two acres of private grounds off the A38 at Chelston, opposite the new Westpark 26 business park.

Anyone who wants to know more about Blackdown Children's Day Nursery can visit www.blackdownchildrensdaynursery.co.uk, email gbt.bway@talktalk.net or call 07754 751750.

Students dress up for literature day

PUPILS at Buckland St Mary CE VA Primary School dressed up as book characters to celebrate World Book Day.

They also brought in their favourite book to share with their friends and did lots of exciting activities based on reading and books.

Year 3 and 4 teacher Rachael Auton said that the children and parents had done a fantastic job with the costumes.

Rachael added: "Characters were very varied. We had James Bond, Emily the Emerald Fairy, Horrid Henry, Cat in the Hat, Roberta from the Railway Children and the White Witch from Narnia to name but a few."

Forest talks event

A SPECIAL event was held on Friday, March 11th at Neroche Parish Hall, Bickenhall.

The event comprised a series of short talks about the Neroche Forest, followed by an open discussion about the future of the forest, and of community involvement with it, in the aftermath of the recent public controversy about the future of state-owned forests in England.

The speakers at the event included Tom Mayberry, on the history of Castle Neroche; David Northcote-Wright on Thurbear Woods nature reserve, and Gavin Saunders on the Neroche Scheme.

Parish annual meet

HEMYOCK Parish Council's annual meeting will take place at 7pm on Thursday, April 7th.

A speaker from Tone Leisure has been invited and there will be written reports from local organisations including the local police. Cheese and wine will be provided.

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Written by countryside
correspondent
TONY JACKSON



Spring has sprung for birds' activity

SPRING has sprung! That's the message coming through loud and clear, particularly on the bird front where nesting activity is now well under way with sites being investigated and a sense of general purpose and activity pervading the rural scene.

The nesting boxes in the garden are all in place and, hopefully, will soon be occupied. Indeed, last year one box set deep into a screen of foliage was quickly occupied but not by a bird.

The occupant was a dormouse and, hopefully, it will again decide to use the box as a nursery. A little to the south, the Seaton marshes and Beer Head are already being invaded by summer migrants. Wheatears have been spotted, together with several sand martins and a pair of stonechats, while chiffchaffs are being heard on all sides and, doubtless, we will soon have reports of the first swallows and, let's hope, cuckoo.

One reader from Axminster has just written to tell me that goldfinches have been visiting her garden throughout the winter, together with good numbers of chaffinches, while a short while ago a sparrowhawk dashed across her duck pond, only to discover it was covered in netting and, she says, made quite a clatter as it rushed past.

For my part, goldfinches, which have been numbered by the dozen in the last few months, suddenly seem to have boycotted the thistle-seed containers which are suspended in front of my office window, but will hopefully return, along with some greenfinches, birds which seem to have declined in a dramatic fashion.

Meanwhile, I understand that a series of Birds for Beginners sessions are planned for the Seaton marshes and Colyford Common. There will be a guide in the hide every Friday from 10am at either the Island Hide or Colyford Common Hide, and a notice will be posted to

indicate which one, then from 12.30pm the guide will move to Seaton Marshes Hide.

So, if you want to learn more about our local bird life and need help with identification, these are the places to be.

● Brian Salisbury from Honiton has written to tell me of an encounter he had, several years ago, near Honiton golf course with what appeared to be a black leopard or puma.

Walking with his Labradors, he suddenly spotted a jet black animal in a field, and quite close. It had, he writes, a small head and long, low curving tail. It appeared to be pouncing up and down, obviously trying to catch voles or mice. Suddenly the animal sniffed the air, then reared up on its hind legs to a height of nearly six feet, then dropped back, spotted its observer and fled with powerful leaps and bounds.

A few years later, Brian had

another close encounter with a cat, but this time a lynx. Again, walking his dogs, he spotted a beautiful big fawn beige-coloured cat with erect ears topped with tufts of hair. It was, he writes, undoubtedly a lynx and only 15 yards away so there could be no mistake in identification.

What can one say, other than lucky man to see these animals? Are they still in the area? Have they been able to breed? The mystery continues and, hopefully, will one day be solved. Meanwhile, I'm always pleased to hear from any reader who has had similar encounters with big cats or, for that matter, any interesting aspect of wildlife and the countryside.

Still remaining with the big cat phenomenon, a reader, John Townsend, tells me that some 14 years ago, while sitting in his car near Dunkeswell with his sister they spotted a large fawn coloured cat with tufts on its pointed ears.

A few years later he saw a similar

animal, again with a witness, and they came to the conclusion that it was a lynx. Certainly, there have been several reports of lynx being seen countrywide, while one was shot in, I believe, Suffolk. This is a story which, I am sure, is going to roll and we have not yet heard the last of big cats in our region.

● Meanwhile, The Urban Heathlands Partnership has reminded me that many birds will not have survived the harsh winter and this particularly applies to heathland birds, several of which, such as Dartford warblers, are insectivorous and will have suffered when the ground was snow blanketed.

Following the bitter winter of 1963 the number of Dartford warblers fell to just a handful of breeding pairs, but in recent years numbers have increased dramatically. The heathlands of Dorset are managed with these birds, and others such as nightjars and woodlarks, in mind.

Those birds which did survive the minus 10 degree temperatures are now starting to nest, and this is a critical period for them.

The nightjar nests on a bare patch of ground in the gorse or heather, Dartford warblers nest low in gorse or heather and woodlarks, the fussiest of nest builders, select ground on the heath but next to broad-leaved woodland.

Observers are not optimistic about survival rates this spring but walkers, with dogs, can help by making sure their animals are kept on the lead from now until August.

Any disturbance by dogs or humans will wreck any chances of successful breeding. However, if

you go to www.dorsetdogs.org you will find information on where dogs can be exercised off-lead without disturbing rare birds.

● With the Government planning to create the first network of British marine reserves by next year, the deadline for proposed boundaries must be submitted to Defra by this summer. Although low-impact fishing and other activities will be allowed to continue in these new reserves, there will also be a number of small, highly protected areas where no fishing, dredging or other human disturbance will be allowed, largely because they will be home to rare species such as seahorses, pink seafans and undulate rays. Currently discussions are being held with fishermen, boats users, divers and conservation groups to agree the siting of these special zones. Without question, the restrictions will affect fishing and recreational activity but if no action is now taken the seas off our coast will be completely barren.

Proposals for the marine reserve and reference area boundaries must be submitted by August 31st this summer and the Government will then launch a public consultation in October before any final decisions are made.

To contact Tony Jackson, write to: Country Scene, South Street, Axminster, Devon EX13 5AD or by email to: wardjackson@tiscali.co.uk

The views expressed are those of the columnist and not necessarily of the newspaper.

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Leisure Review

Advertising sales: 01297 32601 louise@tindlenews.co.uk

Editorial: 01297 631120 blackdown@tindlenews.co.uk

THE family fun day known as Music and Mayhem will be taking place again this year on Sunday, August 28th from 11am til 7pm in Culmstock.

Julie Ware, a member of the organising committee, said: "We are in the early stages of organising this year's event but are already in the process of securing the same level of entertainment as last year and, due to the fantastic feedback we had from visitors, entertainers and traders, we are very confident that this year's event will be bigger and better."

The main idea for holding Music and Mayhem was to raise funds for organisations in the parish of Culmstock and following an application process, the Music and Mayhem Committee will be awarding part of the profits raised to the following:

- £250 to 'Fit to Go' for funding towards new exercise equipment
- £225 to Culmstock School for funding towards new drums
- £120 to Culmstock Pre-School for a new digital camera
- £250 to the Culmstock Society for funding towards providing facilities to hold Royal Wedding Celebrations and barbecue in the village

The remainder of the funds will be reinvested into this year's event.

Contact Kirsty Harris on 01884 840356 or email her at kirmats@btinternet.com if your company would be interested in promoting this year's event or if you are available to help.

**Send details of your
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Mayhem for music event

FREE Leisure Review Diary Dates listing form

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Organised by Tel no

Send your Diary Dates to:

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Please note: This is a free service and whilst we endeavour to include all entries, we cannot guarantee all listings submitted will be published. Please use one form per event.

WE ARE UNABLE TO TAKE DIARY DATES LISTINGS OR QUERIES OVER THE PHONE
Deadline for Diary Dates entries is on Fridays at 12 noon

Diary dates

Saturday, April 9th

DUNKESWELL: Spring Show and Art Exhibition will take place in Throgmorton Hall from 2.30pm. It has been organised by Dunkeswell Garden Society.

HONITON: Hospiscare Evening of Words and Music at 7.30pm at St Paul's Church, Honiton. Tickets are £8 - to include light refreshments - and are available from Eileen on 01404 831866 or on the door.

Monday, April 11th

AWLISCOMBE: Bumper Easter Bingo in the village hall. Eyes down 8pm

Tuesday, April 12th

HONITON: Hospiscare Bargain Sale from 9am to 12noon at the Mackarness Hall, Honiton.

Saturday, April 16th

UPOTTERY: Upottery Parish History Exhibition from 10am to 5pm at Manor Room, Upottery. Refreshments available. For details call 01404 861317.

Tuesday, April 19th

HONITON: Hospiscare Supper Evening at Mackarness Hall, Honiton from 7pm. Tickets cost £7.50 and can be bought from Mary by calling 01404 43196.

Friday, April 29th

HONITON: Pauper's Wedding Feast at Mackarness Hall, Honiton, for Hospiscare. Tickets cost £7.50. To book call Mary on 01404 43196.



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1 Energy boost

KITCHEN caffeine trips, excursions to the office biscuit stash and urgent discussions about sweets — or the indecent lack of them — dominate the day-to-day life of many workplaces.

But those colleagues who reject the need for caffeine and sugar stimuli, and sit under a Ready Brek glow with their cup of herbal tea and plate of sad-looking greens, tend to be treated by colleagues with suspicion — and ignored on the tea round.

According to nutritionist Rachael Anne Hill, there are ways we can all increase our energy levels and reduce cravings for custard creams, without resorting to any drastic lifestyle changes. And the GI Diet is one of them.

“The body absorbs energy from food at different rates,” says Hill. “Using something called the Glycemic Index (GI) you can find out if a food will absorb energy quickly, and so have a high GI level, or vice versa.”

Eating low-GI foods, she adds, can help individuals avoid energy spikes and slumps throughout the day, as well as having other health benefits.

“These foods will help prevent your blood sugar levels rapidly rising and then falling during the day, making it easier to concentrate while at work. A diet rich in low-GI foods can help you eat less, as you stay fuller longer, and they have nutritional advantages too.”

Oaty plum crumbles (Serves 4)

GI Tip: Plums, like cherries, apples and pears, are a particularly low-GI fruit. The crumble topping is made with jumbo oats, which helps to keep the GI of the overall dessert low, too.

750g ripe plums, stoned and sliced
4tbsp water

1-2tbsp light muscovado sugar
Half-fat creme fraiche, low-fat custard or ice cream, to serve

For the crumble topping:
100g wholemeal self-raising flour
3tbsp polyunsaturated margarine
70g dark muscovado sugar
80g jumbo oats
1/4tsp freshly grated nutmeg
Caster sugar, for sprinkling

Place the plums, water and sugar in a saucepan. Heat until simmering, then simmer for 10-15 minutes, until the plums are just cooked and soft.

Meanwhile, to make the crumble topping, put the flour in a mixing bowl, add the margarine and rub it in with the tips of your fingers. The mixture should resemble breadcrumbs. Add the sugar, oats and nutmeg, and mix.

Divide the plums and their cooking liquid between four ramekins. Top with the crumble mixture, then sprinkle with a little caster sugar.

Bake in a preheated oven at 180C/Gas Mark 4 for 15-20 minutes, until the topping is golden and the fruit is bubbling. Serve warm with some half-fat creme fraiche, low-fat custard or ice cream.

Variation: Replace the plums with apples, cherries, pears, apricots, peaches or mixed berries. For some extra spice, add one tablespoon of grated fresh ginger to the crumble mixture.

■ Readers can purchase *GI High-Energy Cookbook* by Rachael Anne Hill, photographs by Nicki Dowey, published by Ryland Peters & Small, for £10.99 inc p&p (rrp £12.99) by calling Macmillan Direct on 01256 302 699 and quoting the reference GLR 4WK



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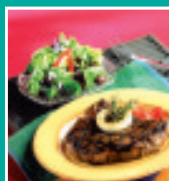
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◆ 2011 Mercedes-Benz C-Class

TWO big numbers you need to be aware of when considering Mercedes-Benz's revised C-Class: 2,000 changes have been made to the car and, since it was launched in 2007, more than one million have been sold.

Through the decades the C-Class has charted a steady course straddling both sporty and luxury sides of the compact premium experience. In saloon form - there's also a revised estate model - Mercedes has always aimed to offer elements of its larger models at a more affordable price point.

You can't stand still in this business and, with ever increasing focus on emissions, consumption and refinement, Mercedes has thoroughly revamped its core model.

First up are the obligatory cosmetic changes. The car's nose and tail have been tweaked slightly - radiator, lights, that sort of thing - and there's still the visual difference between SE/Elegance and Sport models, with the latter boasting a subtle AMG branded bodykit, AMG wheels and a lower ride height.

Inside there's a new dashboard design, the car's colour display screen is now fixed in the upper level of the fascia and the general impression is a welcome shift to a simpler layout inspired in part by the CLS.

Some things don't change, though. The cabin ambience is as refined as ever, and the wide choice of trim, seat and instrument colour options - from wood to metal-like finishes - ensure that both young and old buyers are catered for.

Mercedes hopes everyone will benefit from the car's reduced running costs, in particular company car drivers opting for four-cylinder diesel variants. Bold claims are made that every new engine is both more powerful and more efficient than its predecessor. The petrol range starts with the 156 horsepower C180 and rises to a beefy 204 horsepower C250. On the diesel front there's a 136

horsepower C200 CDI, a 170 horsepower C220 CDI and 204 horsepower C250 CDI.

While all cars come with a six-speed manual gearbox as standard, there's now the option of an improved seven-speed auto across the range. Another standard feature is the inclusion of engine stop-start technology across the range to further boost the car's eco credentials.

The end result is indeed a more frugal ownership experience. Taking the C220 CDI for example, in manual gearbox trim the car posts an impressive 117g/km CO2 rating and 64.2mpg on the combined cycle.

The best news of all is the complete lack of compromise when behind the wheel. Historically manual transmission Mercedes cars haven't been that great, although recent years have seen this trend successfully reversed. The gearbox in the C220 CDI, like other variants, delivers a slick, accurate performance. Engine refinement is also first rate, while performance is more than you could ask for. A willing unit, the 2.1-litre, four-cylinder is quiet and responsive in equal measure.

Ride comfort is also very good, with the C-Class offering a sensible balance of comfort and agility. Pitch and roll is minimal, while the Sport variant's tuned suspension and bigger wheels don't harm but rather enhance the experience if you're an enthusiastic driver. And if you select a petrol-driven car the experience is broadly similar, only the engine is that bit quieter.

Along with the improved driving experience, the C-Class comes with a wider choice of standard and optional equipment. There's a heavy bias towards safety kit, with a lot of 'big car' stuff from the E, CLS and S-Class having trickled down to the C-Class.

From lane departure and blind spot warning systems to active dipping headlights and intelligent cruise control, the car isn't short of helpful toys.

The same is true on the comfort front, with the optional sat-nav supported by standard fit climate and cruise

control, a multi function steering wheel and the usual electric mirrors and windows.

UK buyers can choose from three grades - SE, Elegance and Sport - with the latter adding a subtle AMG bodykit and branded wheels, lower ride height, speed sensitive steering, sports front seats, a three spoke steering wheels and gearchange paddles for auto gearbox variants.

In summary, the car looks a little sharper from some angles but there's still no mistaking what it is. The C-Class is a hugely significant model for Mercedes, and customer loyalty is an important consideration.

What you won't fail to notice is improvements made inside and out of sight. From the car's more polished cabin to the significant gains made in the driving experience and at the pump, the C-Class has successfully evolved in all the right areas.

Facts at a glance

- **Model:** Mercedes-Benz C220 CDI Sport saloon, from £30,975 on the road. Range from £25,515.
- **Engine:** 2.1-litre diesel unit developing 170bhp.
- **Transmission:** 6-speed manual transmission as standard, driving the rear wheels.
- **Performance:** Maximum speed 1xxmph, 0-62mph 8.1 seconds.
- **Economy:** 64.2mpg.CO2 Rating: 117g/km.



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£600 Per calendar month

Ref: 37149



UPOTTERY

Substantial character 4 bedroom U/F cottage with superb views. Fitted kitchen, dining room, hallway, sitting room leading to second sitting room, 2 en-suites, bathroom, O.F.C.H, water included, parking, garden. Cats/children considered. Available Mid April. Honiton Office 01404 42553

£1,150 Per calendar month

Ref: 34319



WATERROW

A character U/F 2 bedroom attached cottage in beautiful rural location. Conservatory, kitchen, sitting room, bathroom, 2 double bedrooms, G.F.C.H, garden, parking, pets/children considered. Available Mid April. Taunton Office 01823 447355

£595 Per calendar month

Ref: 32662

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parking for 2/3
cars and
countryside
views.

**TO
RENT**



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village.

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primary
school.

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£239,500

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Hemyock

£285,000

Spacious detached 4 bedroom family home with double garage situated in a small cul-de-sac. Countryside views across the Blackdown Hills can be seen from the rear of this property.

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BLACKDOWN HILLS

A superbly located residential holding comprising a three bedroom cottage with spacious two bedroom detached bungalow and two storey barn offering enormous potential. All set within approximately 6 acres of land and located in a beautiful rural, yet accessible location on the slopes of the Blackdown Hills Ref: 42571

Guide price £750,000

Wellington 01823 662822



LUPPITT

A delightful detached Grade II Listed character cottage in a stunning rural location with outbuildings and panoramic views. Sitting room. Dining room. Family room. Study. Kitchen/Breakfast room. 3 Bedrooms. Family bathroom. Detached studio. Double car port and workshop. 0.4 Acre gardens. Ref: 43963

Guide price £495,000

Honiton 01404 45885



BLACKDOWN HILLS

A substantial barn conversion centred around a cobbled courtyard and enjoying fine country views over the surrounding countryside Ref: 43585

Guide price £650,000

Wellington 01823 662822



CRADDOCK

A five bedroom detached country house located in a conservation area, set within wonderful grounds and adjoining field running down to the river. Ref: 44635

Guide price £610,000

Wellington 01823 662822



MEMBURY

A delightful detached four-bedroom stone cottage. Sitting room with fireplace. Dining room. Kitchen/breakfast room. Utility. Garden room. 4 Bedrooms. Master en suite and family bathroom. Detached workshop/shed. Gardens and views. Ref: 43015

Guide price £379,000

Honiton 01404 45885



YARCOMBE

A beautiful detached former estate cottage in an elevated location with impressive countryside views in a southerly direction together with gardens and grounds of about 1 acre. Entrance porch. Superb kitchen/family room with vaulted ceiling and inglenook fireplace. Drawing room. Utility. Study. Principal bedroom with en-suite shower. Two further bedrooms. Family bathroom. Gardens and woodland extending to about 1 acre. Detached timber built office. Garage. Ref: 43591

Guide price £450,000

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